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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Item 4- Violation of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in Yemen

More than 3 years after the launch of the Saudi led coalition attack, the world is faced with a massive human catastrophe in Yemen. Chronic poverty, hunger, famine and the destruction of all civilian infrastructures such as schools and hospitals in continued Saudi coalition airstrikes, are all the direct results of this conflict. The continued violation of human rights as well as international humanitarian law has resulted in a crisis which the UN referred to it as "an entirely man-made catastrophe."[1]
And according to UN and other international human rights organizations' reports the Saudi led coalition has violated fundamental human rights such as the right to peace, right to life and right to health in Yemen in a blatant way.

1 Violation of the right to peace and humanitarian law

The attacks of the coalition forces which continue unabated and have taken a new form in the blockade of Port on Hodeidah's and violated Yemeni people's right to peace and humanitarian law[2]

A) Blocking and impeding humanitarian access

The Saudi-led coalition's restrictions on imports have worsened the dire humanitarian situation. The coalition has delayed and diverted fuel tankers, closed critical ports and stopped goods from entering seaports. Fuel needed to power generators of hospitals and pump water to civilian residences has also been blocked.[3] Access to fuel has been critical for water pumping, and drinking water supply, blocking the access has led to even more cases of acute watery diarrhoea and cholera, both of which have been deadly for small children in these years.[4]

On June 2018 UNICEF Executive Director, Henrietta Fore, said that Assault on key Yemeni port would endanger 300,000 children and 'choke off' aid for millions more and Any attack on the key Yemeni port of Hodeida would deepen one of the world's worst malnutrition crises apart of that millions more children throughout Yemen depend on the humanitarian and commercial goods that have been coming through that port every day for their very survival.[5]

With the escalation of attacks on Port Hodeidah, known as the 'mouth of Yemen, in the recent months, aid workers have warned the assault, could shut down the vital route for some 70 percent of Yemen's food and humanitarian aid. Two-thirds of Yemen's **population** of 27 million relies on aid and 8.4 million are already at risk of starving.[6]

B) Attacks against civilians, a violation of humanitarian law

The attacks operated by the Saudi led coalition with cooperation of Yemeni government against Yemen are reported to cost the country more than 100 billion dollars. The conflict is one of the most catastrophic wars in the recent decades; a war whose repercussions only target civilians. Each day this war unveils new human catastrophes, ranging from famine and hunger which according to UNICEF report have affected children, to the widespread diseases such as cholera,[7] falling behind from education for hundreds of thousands of children, and the displacement of millions of Yemenis.[8]
According to UN reports, by violating fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and violation of the right to peace, Saudi Arabia has faced the world with undermining these two great international achievements.

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[1] 2017 report of the UN Human Rights Council.
[2] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/.
[3] https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen.
[4] https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/06/1012032.
[5] https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/06/1012032.
[6] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/16/yemen-attack-hundreds-killed-as-rebels-grip-on-hodeidah-airport-loosens.
[7] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/06/yemen-conflict-war-houthi-sanaa.
[8] http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2017/9/59b6a3ec4/unhcr-report-highlights-education-crisis-refugee-children.html.

The Saudi military coalition – which receives logistical support, weapons and political backing from the United States and the United Kingdom – has been accused of killing hundreds of children in Yemen, according to a confidential UN report.9

The report says that 51 per cent of all child deaths and injuries in Yemen last year were the result of the Saudi-led military operation. It says the deaths were "unacceptably high". Saudi Arabia has insisted it is operating within international law.[10] On August 2018 dozens of students were returning from a summer camp, as the students sat waiting to resume their journey home, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit their school bus. At least 29 children under the age of 15, some as young as 6 years old, were killed in the attack, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.[11]

The behavior of Saudi officials is in conflict with the League of Nations 16 December 1924 Declaration, on the protection of children under the title of the "Geneva Declaration, and also the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1959), the UN General Assembly declaration of 14 December 1974 regarding the protection of women and children during crises and armed conflicts and article 77 of the Geneva Conventions Additional Protocol of 1974 with regards to particular respect towards children against any form of disrespectful attacks. Also resolutions (23)2444 of 19 December 1968, (24)2597 of 16 December 1969, (25)2674 and (25)2675 of 9 December 1970 on respect for human rights and on basic principles for the protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts are violated by Saudi Arabia and its coalition. The resolutions and enforceable documents prohibit any form of aggression against civilians during conflict among states, however, the Saudi military continues its onslaught of attacks against this impoverished Middle East country.

According to UN reports and other international organizations such as Amnesty International,12 Human Rights Watch13 and Medicine Sans Frontier etc.14 the Saudi government has also violated the right to peace of the people of Yemen. By signing the Right to Peace Declaration, the Saudi government has made itself obliged to observe this international document, whereas its aggression in Yemen is a total violation of the right to peace.

The international obligations of countries and the observation of international laws is the prerequisite to reach lasting peace in the world. By violating international law, failure to observe international humanitarian law principles and violation of the Right to Peace Declaration, the Saudi government has faced the Middle East region and the world with calamity and human catastrophe.

2 Violation of the right to life

War and instability in Yemen has resulted in the violation of the right to life of millions of Yemenis. Millions are struggling with hunger and do not have access to basic living opportunities

Horror and uncertainty are part of life in Yemen. The armed conflict has taken a terrible toll on the civilian population. The coalition has conducted scores of indiscriminate and disproportionate airstrikes hitting civilian objects that have killed thousands of civilians in violation of the laws of war, with munitions that the United States, the United Kingdom, and others still supply, benefiting from cooperation of Yemeni government.

The conflict that escalated in March 2015 in Yemen has left more than 22 million people - 75 per cent of the population - in need of humanitarian aid, the greatest number in any country in the world. More than 60 per cent of the population (17.8 million people) are without enough to eat. Over 8.4 million of these people are one step away from famine. About 16 million Yemenis do not have access to safe water sources, with rural areas most affected.

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9 https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/un-saudi-arabia-military-operations-yemen-children-civilian-deaths-report-uk-us-unacceptable-a7900966.html.

10 https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/un-saudi-arabia-military-operations-yemen-children-civilian-deaths-report-uk-us-unacceptable-a7900966.html.

11 htt https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/12/bombing-of-schools-by-saudi-arabia-led-coalition-in-yemen/ ps://www.npr.org/2018/08/09/637175068/saudi-led-coalition-strikes-school-bus-in-yemen-killing-at-least-29-children.

12 https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/saudi-arabia.

13 https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/yemen.

14 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/RuleOfLaw/ArmsTransfers/AmericansDemocracyAndHumanRightsInBahrain.pdf.

Recommendations:

1. The ODVV calls upon the international community and international human rights and humanitarian law institutions to make further efforts for the establishment of peace and reconciliation in Yemen and exert more pressure on the coalition forces to stop the conflict.

2. The ODVV deems the commitment and accountability of a government towards its citizens as the most important good governance principle, and believes that by taking part in attacks against Yemeni civilians, medical centres and hospitals and ports, not only has the Yemeni government not fulfilled its duties as the representative of the people, but it also is responsible for crimes committed against the Yemeni people.

3. The ODVV deems the first step towards improvement of the humanitarian situation in Yemen halting military attacks in the country and the next step the multilateral international efforts to establish peace and reconciliation among all sides in Yemen.

4. The ODVV calls for an end to the siege of the people of Yemen and calls upon the Yemeni government to stop supporting those who have put a siege on Yemen so that the people who need the highest levels of humanitarian aid and assistance, are freed from the "man-made" human catastrophe.